

Don't be afraid; just believe (Faith that surrenders)

Mark 5:21-43

Key verse: 36 “Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, ‘Don't be afraid; just believe.’”

At first glance, the passage seems to be all about healing. Thus, I was hesitant to deliver this message. After 2 major brain surgeries, I experience constant pain. My younger brother has two sons with Down's syndrome- one who has needed multiple surgeries. I questioned God, “Why does Jesus not heal?”

In this message, however, I want to focus on Jesus' words; “Don't be afraid; just believe.” And I want to think about what kind of faith Jesus wants us to have. What is it to just believe? And what do we expect Jesus to do for us when we overcome fear and just believe? Through this passage, as we struggle with these questions, may we let Jesus take us by the hand to encounter him newly, as the loving God who gives us far more than what we think we need or want. As we surrender to the goodness of Christ through times of trial, may we experience Jesus giving us spiritual breakthroughs until we encounter Jesus personally as the Resurrection and the Life, and trust in him all the more.

I. Jairus fell at Jesus' feet (21-24a)

After healing the man with an impure spirit, Jesus didn't take a coffee break. He again crossed over by boat to Capernaum and made himself available to a large crowd. Look at verses 22-23. “Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. He pleaded earnestly with him, ‘My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.’”

Jairus was a synagogue leader in Capernaum. Surely Jesus must have been in Jairus' synagogue before. Or at least, Jairus heard Jesus' teachings and saw him healing the sick and driving out demons. To him, Jesus was a sensational teacher! Nonetheless, he was aware of the mounting conflicts between Jesus and other religious leaders.

However, something unexpectedly disastrous happened to him. His little daughter, the very apple of his eye, suddenly got sick and was dying. His love for his daughter and his fear of losing her compelled him to come to Jesus. His honor as a synagogue's leader and political correctness did not matter. If his daughter could be restored to life, he was willing to do anything. So, he came to Jesus and fell at his feet earnestly pleading with him.

Here we can learn God's wisdom behind such unexpected and painful diseases, problems and issues. I don't mean that God intentionally causes such troubles in order to corner us. But God knows how to grab our attention. We, who are self-reliant, self-confident and self-sufficient cannot but turn our eyes to Jesus, and fall at his feet, earnestly pleading with him when we face something impossible. I hope that in impossible and painful times we may not waste the precious God-given opportunity to come to Jesus by turning to people or to other solutions too quickly.

As a synagogue leader, Jairus could have used his authority, demanding that Jesus do something. But see what he did; upon seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet before a large crowd. He pleaded earnestly with him. He had one request to Jesus; “Jesus, please come and touch my little daughter.” Now look at verse 24a. “So Jesus went with him.” So far so good! Jesus heard

his humble prayer and went with him. Jesus also indeed hears our humble and earnest plea and walks with us. May we keep coming to Christ in our impossible situations.

II. A woman touched Jesus' clothes and fell at his feet (24b-34)

As Jesus began to walk towards Jairus' house, the large crowd followed him and pressed around him. Look at verses 25-29. "And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, 'If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.' Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering." What an amazing story this is! She believed that if she only touched Jesus' clothes she would be healed. She believed that Jesus is so powerful, that if she just touched Jesus' clothes- not even Jesus himself- she would be healed. What great faith she had! And by just touching his cloak she was immediately healed from her suffering and her bleeding through Jesus. Though many who were sick and needy pressed around him, only this woman seemed to be healed.

We rejoice that some of our coworkers have been healed from deadly diseases. We give glory and thanks to God who healed them according to their faith. He has and is powerfully demonstrating among us that indeed he is the Great healer! May we keep coming to Jesus our Great Healer with faith!

But what about others who have not been healed though? Apostle Paul was not healed from the thorn in his body even after he prayed earnestly three times. What is the difference between the woman and the crowd, between the healed, and not healed among Christians? I was struck with these questions. I didn't know what to just believe. However, the best antidote for our doubts and thoughts is to come back to see what the Bible clearly says.

Now look at verses 30-31. "At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, 'Who touched my clothes?' 'You see the people crowding against you,' his disciples answered, 'and yet you can ask, "Who touched my clothes?"' His disciples couldn't understand what Jesus was talking about.

Look at verses 32-33. "But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth." Why was Jesus urgently looking for the woman? Was it because she had stolen his power or because she didn't say "Thank you"? I don't think so. She had her own strategy; just touch his cloak. She also had an exit plan: just run away asap. But Jesus kept looking for her. So, look at her now. She stopped running away. She came and fell at his feet, trembling with fear, perhaps afraid that he would punish her. But despite her fears, she came humbly to Christ. She submitted herself to Christ, to allow him to speak and do with her as HE pleased. This is true faith and the meaning of falling at his feet- it is to submit ourselves to the sovereignty and good pleasure of Christ. Jesus- do with me as you will!

What did Jesus truly intend to do with and for her? Did he call her to punish her or cause her to suffer? No! Look at verse 34. "He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.'" We can learn three things from Jesus' gracious and life-giving words.

Firstly, Jesus called her, “Daughter!” For 12 years, she had been known as an “unclean” and “cursed” woman because of constant bleeding. (cf. Lev 15:25-27) She had been treated like a leper; nobody touched her; even her own family could not come near her. She felt worse than an orphan- she had been abandoned by people and abandoned by God. She lived in self-quarantine for 12 long years, far worse than COVID. And when she touched Jesus, she had been healed from her physical sickness. But here Jesus called her “Daughter!” When Jesus called her daughter, his soul touched her wounded and lonely soul, healing her soul. When Jesus called her daughter, his heart touched her broken heart, and healed her heart. His words of love and acceptance made her heart alive and clean, as pure as snow. As Jesus called her daughter, his Spirit touched her spirit as well. (cf. Rom 8:9) By the Spirit of Christ in her could she call God, “Abba Father!” (cf. Rom 8:15-16). She could say, I am a beloved daughter of God! Praise Jesus who wants to give us more than physical blessing. Praise Jesus who wants to heal our heart and spirit and soul. He wants to restore us as the beloved children of God!

Secondly, Jesus said, “Your faith has healed you.” While trying to be healed, she had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and she had spent all she had. Without being healed, she got worse. Now listen to what Jesus said to her, “Your faith has healed you.” Jesus recognized her as a woman of faith and praised her faith. God was pleased with her faith. Her faith had been refined in trials and suffering. Now she had a genuine faith of greater worth than gold.

Thirdly, Jesus said to her, “Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.” If she had not fallen at his feet, if she had not surrendered to Christ, she might have vanished only with physical healing. But now Jesus told her to go in peace. Jesus’ peace would dwell in her soul and heart forever. Surely she was freed from all sufferings- physical and spiritual and emotional. For when she surrendered herself into his hands, Jesus gave her himself, along with every blessing in him. She received Jesus himself, the Giver of all heavenly gifts.

Now we need to ask a question; “How can we approach and touch Jesus?” The better question is, “Will you fall at his feet? And will you let Jesus touch your soul and heart? Will you let him give you himself, the best gift? Or will you only expect a partial healing from him? The Bible says, it is through his broken body that Jesus made a new and living way for us to approach God’s throne of grace in heaven. (cf. Heb 4:16, 10:20) Each one of us can boldly approach and touch the Glorified Jesus on the throne at any time and receive his mercy in our time of need. As we fall at his feet especially while going through deep and great trials, he touches our soul and heart with deep grace. For He will do what he knows is best for God’s glory and for our good, though not necessarily what we expect. Here is a short testimony¹ from Joni Eareckson Tada.

So, I ask you again, will you boldly approach and humbly touch Glorified Jesus on the throne of God’s grace? Will you submit? For the greater the trial, the deeper his grace.

III. Faith that just believes (35-43)

While Jesus seemed to waste precious time looking for this woman, then listening to her life story, and then talking to this woman- Jairus’ heart must have been dying with impatience. Why is Jesus taking so long? His 12-year old daughter was dying- it was a 911 emergency! Verse 35a says, “While Jesus was still speaking...” While Jesus was going on and on with this woman,

¹ <https://www.joniandfriends.org/52-years-in-my-wheelchair>

what happened? Look at verse 35b. "...some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. 'Your daughter is dead,' they said, 'Why bother the teacher anymore?'"

But despite his impatience, Jesus had been planting faith in Jairus. As he witnessed Jesus' healing of the woman and as he listened to Jesus' words, Jairus' faith was likely strengthened too. "Surely my daughter is Jesus' daughter too! Surely Jesus will heal my daughter too!" But just as his faith in Jesus began to grow like a small mustard seed, his faith was greatly challenged by Satan's attack- "Your daughter is dead. Why bother the teacher anymore?"

How did Jesus protect Jairus' faith? Let's read verse 36. "Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, 'Don't be afraid; just believe.'" Here we can learn three important things again.

Firstly, Jesus overheard but ignored what they said. The NIV translation of verse 36 says, "Overhearing," but the footnote says, "Ignoring." Jesus heard the words of the people- however, he intentionally ignored what they said. What they said sounded factual, reasonable, and scientific to Jairus and they seemed very considerate towards Jesus and his time. The girl is dead. It's too late. Jesus can do nothing now. So, let Jesus go. Jesus, however, ignored what they said. And Jesus wanted Jairus to ignore, to close his ears to words of unbelief and fatalism and death. Jesus wanted Jairus to listen to Jesus alone.

Secondly, Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid." What could be greater than the fear of losing your most beloved child? This kind of terror is the expected response to one who hears: your daughter is dead. But what did Jesus say to Jairus? "Don't be afraid." "Do not give the devil a foothold in your heart even at the news of your daughter's death."

Thirdly, Jesus told him, "Just believe." When Jairus first came to Jesus, he wanted and expected Jesus to come, touch his sick daughter, and then heal her before she died. In his plan and calculations Jesus was supposed to come in time to heal her. She was not supposed to die. But she did die. Now everything that he hoped for and requested of Jesus had been dashed to pieces. What should Jairus do at this dead end? Jesus simply told him, "Just believe."

What is it to just believe? From the context, it is to keep trusting in Jesus, not on our own terms, but on Jesus' terms. It is not just to fall at his feet to get what we want and how we want, but it is to surrender everything into his hands so that he can be himself and he can do what is best for God's glory and for our good. It is to trust that Jesus can do immeasurably more than what we hope for or imagine. It is to believe that Jesus has power over life and even death. And it is to submit our plans to his thoughts and ways. Jesus' words of "just believe" reminds us of Isaiah 55:8-9. "'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the Lord. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.'"

Now let's see what Jesus did next. In verses 37-40, the author Mark fast forwards what Jesus did No more delays! Jesus got rid of anything and anybody related to death from Jairus' house. Jesus took only the parents and his three disciples into the place where the dead girl lay. Jesus was now standing in front of the dead/sleeping girl. Look at verses 41-43. "He took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha kum!' (which means 'Little girl, I say to you, get up!') Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old)."

Jairus only wanted healing from Jesus. But what Jesus truly did for him was far beyond what Jairus wanted him to do. Jesus touched his dead girl, not his sick girl. Jairus received his daughter back from death, not just from sickness. Jesus led Jairus beyond the limits of his

thoughts and ways- to the unimaginable outcome of death. Then Jesus walked with him to the equally unimaginable outcome of resurrection. At the bedside of his dead daughter, Jairus encountered Jesus as he truly is - as the living Almighty God, who has authority over death. The process of his encountering Jesus as he truly is, however, was very painful. He had to experience his worst fear - his daughter's death. Jairus had to keep believing as Jesus told him to. He kept trusting in Jesus not knowing what Jesus would do. Only as he allowed Jesus to be himself, to be Sovereign God Incarnate, could he encounter Jesus personally as the Giver of Life and the Resurrection and the Life.

I am not sure how we can even call this process: but Jesus took him through a spiritual breakthrough, opened his spiritual eyes to encounter Jesus as the living God who raises the dead. No matter how we name this process, there is one thing we are absolutely sure of; Jesus leads us in this process as we keep trusting in him. Surely Jesus is the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith.

Just as Jesus' words: "Don't be afraid; Just believe," and his raising of the dead daughter affected Jairus, Jesus' three disciples- especially Peter must have been profoundly impacted by Jesus' words and his power over death. The author Mark received this first-hand account from Peter. Peter might have said to Mark, 'When I began to follow Jesus, I never expected him to be crucified. Once I rebuked him for talking about such nonsense. Jesus rebuked me back calling me Satan because I had in my mind the things of man, not the concerns of God. Three times I denied him! The fear of death overwhelmed me! I totally despaired. But Jesus' words; 'Don't be afraid; just believe!' resounded in my soul again and again. When he rose from the dead and appeared to me, I encountered him as the Risen Christ, who conquered the power of sin and death and who fulfilled God's thoughts in his way. This gloried Jesus has dwelt in me through the Holy Spirit. He touches me and I touch him daily! Dear Mark! Jesus has led me beyond the boundaries of my thoughts and my ways through his death and his resurrection. I have encountered Christ as the living God, who is the Resurrection and Life! And since then, I have walked with him by faith. In a few days, I will be crucified, but I am not afraid. I just believe."

I have also heard my Lord Jesus Christ speaking to me, "Don't be afraid; just believe." I am not sure whether Jesus will heal me or not from my sickness. Yet I will keep praying for healing. But there is one thing I just believe; my gracious Lord and Savior Jesus is taking me to a spiritual breakthrough. When I patiently surrender myself into his hands, I can encounter my personal Living Almighty God. For this reason, I am very thankful for my weakness. I want to see him face to face and know him as he truly is. Just as Jesus spoke to Jairus and to Peter, so he is speaking to you, "Don't be afraid; just believe." May each of us encounter him very personally and newly.